

Pilgrimage to Remember

by Marcia E. Cole

We pilgrims --
We pilgrims all.
Black and white
young and old
took a journey to remember.
From up-south Alexandria
to down-south Montgomery
traveling by the busload .

Soil, from the beginning of time,
bears witness to mankind's folly.
Storing historic memory
waiting to be revealed.
We pilgrims carried jarfuls,
dug up from two known sites.
Sites of unspeakable horrors
to install in a sacred space.

Joseph McCoy and Benjamin Thomas
-- young black men from Virginia.
Their lives cut short, much too soon
victims of mob mayhem.

No match for all those riled-up men
Lady Justice blindfolded and mum --
hung her head as she quietly wept
unable to save the day.

With her fairness scales and impotent sword
clutched in either hand
she turned away with heavy heart
and slowly departed.

It's said we are not truly dead
as long as our names are spoken.
We spoke their names time and again.
breathing life into their existence.

The jars of soil bearing their names
were added to the collection --
row upon row on bold display
at the Legacy Museum.

A sad social commentary
because there are so many.

Remembering means not to forget
through vigilance and action
if we're to ensure justice for all
and stop the need for collections.